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PRIORITY THEMES

DEVELOPMENT: INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1987/24, endorsed, under the objective of development, the priority theme of integration of women in the process of development for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-sixth session. According to the results of the Seminar on the Integration of Women in Development, held at Vienna from 9 to 11 December 1991, and the Expert Group Meeting on Integration of Ageing and Elderly Women into Development, held at Vienna from 7-11 October 1991, there is clearly a need to redefine the framework of current approaches to women in development; furthermore, development strategies do not consider women's numerous reproductive activities of a demographic, economic and socio-cultural nature that are essential to the survival and development of society, and there is consequently a need for gender analysis. Ageing and elderly women's contributions have been particularly disregarded. A number of crucial issues from the perspective of women's advancement and their relationship to development for the 1990s are identified, such as the accountability of Governments and the empowerment of women.

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BACKGROUND

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1987/24, established the priority themes for the thirty-second to thirty-sixth sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women. Under the objective of development, the priority theme of the Commission at its thirty-sixth session is the integration of women in the process of development. Efforts to integrate women into development have been conducted since the early 1970s and various strategies have been developed for that purpose. It is therefore time to review those efforts, to explore future perspectives in this area, and to examine in detail, with regard to a concrete issue (the integration of ageing and elderly women into development), the problems encountered, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 44/76.

2. Historically, what has been termed the women-in-development (WID) approach emerged in the early 1970s as a conceptual and programmatic priority in response to growing evidence that economic and social development efforts had not benefited women as much as men. It was associated with a disenchantment with the lack of progress in development in general; it represented a change in the way policy makers and researchers approached the issue of women. The term WID may be seen as recognition of the fact that women are not only mothers, affected passively by development in general and by welfare and family-planning programmes in particular, but also economic agents, in charge of key aspects of production and economic development, whose contribution could be enhanced by more sensitive development programmes and projects. The WID approach has put the focus on the productive role of women, as opposed to previous approaches, which tended to insist on women's role and needs as mothers. This new emphasis has played a powerful role in convincing the international community that development programmes and projects have to target women. A third and more recent approach emphasizing empowerment includes a consideration of the development goals pursued by societies and the mechanisms determining the unequal situation of women. It should enable women to gain control over their own lives and to resolve conflicts between their productive and reproductive roles. Direct participation in development and in public life is both a consequence and a means of empowerment. These different approaches to WID have been formulated to reflect women's rights and actual roles and the ways in which these are structured by society.

3. Two meetings were held at Vienna on the general question of women in development and the specific group of ageing women: the Expert Group Meeting on the Integration of Ageing and Elderly Women into Development, held from 7 to 11 October 1991, and the Seminar on the Integration of Women in Development, held from 9 to 11 December 1991. After taking stock of the trends and present situation, the participants focused their discussion on future policy and programme development.

4. The results of the two meetings may be described as extremely innovative. The attention of the Commission is drawn to the recommendations on systematic gender analysis, the accountability of Governments, the role of targets, the need for taking into account the entire life course, and recognition of the fundamental role of women in reproductive activities of a demographic, economic and socio-cultural nature that are essential to the survival and development of society. Since the results could have an immediate impact on the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, to be held in 1995, and on the activities of the United Nations system and of donors, the conclusions and recommendations of the meetings are presented in annexes I and II.

Annex I

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SEMINAR ON THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

(Vienna, 9-11 December 1991)

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1. The participants at the Seminar on the Integration of Women in Development reviewed the experience acquired in the implementation of different women-in-development (WID) strategies and then discussed emerging issues that needed to be tackled in the 1990s and proposals for the future, in particular, proposals for the period leading up to the convening in 1995 of the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace.

I. WOMEN-IN-DEVELOPMENT: EXPERIENCE AND LESSONS

2. WID was discussed from two perspectives: its conceptual framework and the experience acquired in its implementation.

A. Conceptual framework

Conclusions

Integration of women into development: what kind of integration, what kind of development?

3. A distinction was made between two possible approaches to WID: one was an attempt to add women's concerns to the development agenda already set by

others; the other involved an attempt to transform development agendas on the basis of women's analysis of what would both meet their basic needs and empower them.

4. It was agreed that the implementation of all aspects of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women a/ required that women be present to share the task of determining what type of development should take place. The objective should be to transform the whole range of public policy so that women would gain more control over their own lives through, for example, better health, better income, better education, better access to skills and technology, entitlements to capital and land, legal equality, and control over their own bodies. The extent to which indicators of women's development improved should be a measure of policy success. That would then place women in the position of bringing their perspectives to bear on a whole range of national and international issues.

5. It was noted that donors and development agencies had an important role to play in the implementation of WID policies. At the same time, it was acknowledged that they were intermediaries of social change and that little could be achieved without the full involvement of all concerned at all levels.

Women and gender

6. The participants agreed that it was appropriate to use the concepts "women" and "gender" with an emphasis that would vary depending on different contexts. Cender referred to socially constructed and culturally variable roles that women and men played in their daily lives. It referred to a structural relationship of inequality between men and women and was manifested in labour markets and in political structures, as well as in the household. It was reinforced by custom, law and specific development policies. In order to meet the objective of the advancement of women it was necessary to develop gender-based analysis and to integrate it into macroeconomic and microeconomic policies. It was recognized that gender-based training, both in terms of concepts and in terms of skills in gender-based analysis and planning, was an important strategy for advancing the WID agenda.

The need to rethink development and concurrently refocus WID

7. It was agreed that there was a need to give the concept of WID a broader meaning and to refocus it within a new theoretical framework and a transformed development agenda.

8. Central to the refocusing of WID was an emphasis on the self-empowerment of women, a process in which women gained control over their own lives by knowing and claiming their rights at all levels of society: at the international, national and "household" levels. Self-empowerment meant that women gained autonomy, were able to set their own agendas and were fully involved in economic, political and social decision-making processes. That would translate into everyday reality the principles of the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 34/180.

9. The new theoretical framework should recognize the importance of global economic and political issues for the advancement of women and should provide an analysis of the gender dimensions of those issues. It should also incorporate a gender analysis that took into account race, ethnic origin and class

and recognized the existence of gender-based hierarchies in the household, the community and other areas of society and their impact on women's access to power and resources. One central requirement for the self-empowerment of women was more time.

10. The participants saw the need to link democratization, human resource development and empowerment. Women could only participate in the process of democratization to the extent that their human rights were fully recognized, their human potential was developed and they were empowered. Those were necessary preconditions for women to create opportunities for themselves to participate. "Human development" and empowerment were essential for effective participation in democratic processes.

11. The participants redefined human resource development as "human development" in order to underline the fact that human development was a lifelong process that started at birth. It must focus on improving the quality of life and on enlarging people's choices by investing in programmes on the health of women and children, nutrition, housing, basic education etc.

Developing statistics, indicators and analysis for a fuller understanding of gender inequality

12. The participants recognized the efforts to develop gender-disaggregated data. Further work was necessary to provide a basis on which to build more effective policies. Efforts were needed to demonstrate and illuminate:

(a) The gender dimension in all areas of social, economic and political life;

(b) The complex interrelationship between different dimensions of gender inequality.

13. Particular effort was necessary to produce concepts and measures that reflected the value of all work, paid and unpaid, and the link between the productive and reproductive roles of women. The extent to which unpaid work, both in the home and in the community, supported and underpinned general social and economic development needed to be better understood in order for the burden to be shared more equally between men and women.

14. The kind of gender-based analysis advocated was central to The World's Women 1970-1990: Trends and Statistics, b/ a second edition of which should be prepared prior to the Fourth World Conference on Women. National efforts at similar compilation and analysis should be developed further. Concepts and indicators developed to measure and illuminate gender inequality must be reflected in future editions of the Human Development Report, published by the United Nations Development Programme, the World Development Report, published by the World Bank, and other United Nations publications.

B. Implementation

Conclusions

National capacity for sustainability

15. The participants concluded that the experience of WID revealed the need for a two-level approach to implementing national WID strategies; at the

public-policy level and at the grass-roots level. The power granted to WID offices and national machinery within national administrations reflected the importance attached to having women's advancement on national political agendas.

16. The power of WID offices and national machinery, together with their sense of strategy, technical competence and political skills, would determine their influence on the policy debate and, hence, the extent to which economic and social policies favourable to women's advancement would be adopted as well as the nature of such policies. In addition, there was a need for commitments at the national level to incorporate a gender perspective in the policies and programmes of all ministries and to elaborate well-targeted strategies to close the gap for women in key sectors.

17. There could be no effective WID policy at the grass-roots level without basic human rights such as freedom to associate, freedom of speech and freedom to criticize government policy directions. The will and ability to form strategic alliances between, on the one hand, groups outside Governments (including academic, private-sector and community groups) that wanted progress for women and, on the other, public policy makers would significantly influence the likelihood that policies and programmes would emerge that were favourable to women. That applied to donor agencies and Governments in both developed and developing countries.

18. At the grass-roots level, a larger constituency for advancing the concerns of women had to be built with other social movements, such as the peace movement and the environmental movement. It was also important for women's advocacy groups to internationalize their concerns and to become more knowledgeable about the economic and political consequences of changes currently occurring worldwide.

Accountability

19. The participants agreed that another important lesson was the need to pay more attention to accountability. Binding procedures needed to be developed by donors and development agencies, as well as recipients, to ensure that WID activities could be monitored and evaluated by the constituency they were meant to serve. The links between, on the one hand, specific organizational structure, goals and procedure and, on the other, the extent and forms of accountability needed to be better understood and researched. Accountability also meant strengthening lobbying and advocacy skills among women's movements and non-governmental organizations in order to critically follow and question the work of institutions responsible for WID policy and implementation, such as development agencies and Governments.

Training

20. Agencies involved in gender-based training had concluded that there was a need to incorporate personal and political analysis into such training and to improve coordination of those programmes at the international level. It was proposed that materials and modules analysing macroeconomic trends from a gender perspective should be incorporated into gender-based training. It was vital to deal with the interface between the world economy, national development plans and the role of women. Gender-based analysis could also be usefully introduced at the level of project beneficiaries in order to increase awareness of women's roles and contributions to development and to serve as a basis for programme improvement. It was recognized that there was already a capacity in

that area in some developing countries, both within and outside of Governments, and that it was important for bilateral and multilateral agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations, to help develop that capacity and the sharing of those experiences in building similar capacities in other developing countries.

21. In addition to consultants and local research staff, training efforts had to include the staff of non-governmental organizations, government counterparts of donor agencies, as well as donor and development agencies.

The relationship between international agencies and local women's movements

22. It was important to recognize that over the preceding ten years a number of women's organizations had launched programmes and networks at the national level in developing countries, as well as at the international level. There was a need for those initiatives to be recognized and for United Nations entities and bilateral organizations to involve them in project and programme development exercises where appropriate. Those organizations also needed to be supported and strengthened.

23. The limitations of working exclusively with women's bureaux needed to be recognized by bilateral organizations and United Nations specialized agencies, and efforts should be made where possible to encourage such bureaux to reach out and support the work of women's organizations in developing countries.

Coordination among agencies

24. It was felt that there was a need for better coordination of WID programmes at the international, regional and national levels among agencies in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and overlapping, and to increase the impact of programmes.

25. There was a need for the work involved in efforts to integrate gender issues to be shared more equally between countries. That would entail more consultation and coordination among donor agencies and recipients, within and outside of Governments.

II. IDENTIFICATION OF EMERGING ISSUES

A. Global trends

Conclusion

26. The participants agreed that little had been done to incorporate women into international strategies such as the International Development Strategies (IDS) and to analyse the gender dimensions of global economic and political restructuring and of emerging international environmental problems.

B. Democratization

Conclusion

27. Relationships between democratization, human rights, survival, violence and gender were important issues in their own right and in relation to linking global trends with local ones.

C. Marketization, privatization and deregulation

Conclusion

28. The participants, noting the widespread trends towards marketization, privatization and deregulation, agreed that it was important to recognize that markets and the private sector might be no less biased against women than the State or the public sector. It was also vital to recognize the complementarity between the provision of public sector services for women and women's ability to take advantage of new opportunities.

D. Human resources and development

Conclusions

29. Concern was expressed about the deterioration of social sector services and labour market conditions in many countries in periods in which structural adjustment programmes were being carried out. In designing and implementing macroeconomic policies, both donors and recipients should include positive measures to ensure that the needs of women were fully taken into account, especially in terms of their access to social and public services and to better income opportunities.

Health and sanitation

30. Emerging issues in the area of health and sanitation included:

(a) The impact of structural adjustment programmes on the quantity and quality of health services;

(b) The acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) pandemic and the resurgence of cholera and other epidemic diseases;

(c) The contamination of land, air and water;

(d) Concerns about the environment and population growth that were used to reduce women's reproductive rights; promoting equal opportunity and giving women choice and control over their own fertility provided a more sustainable development path;

(e) The use of technology to undermine the survival of women (for example, to abort female fetuses), and other attitudes towards female children that discriminated against them.

Labour markets and employment

31. Deregulation policies, changes in ways of organizing production processes, changes in skill requirements, increased automation, and the relocation of production were threatening, in many countries, the quality of women's employment opportunities and working conditions. There was a need to design and introduce measures to improve the situation of women in home-based work.

32. The importance of overcoming barriers to the participation of disabled women in the process of development was emphasized.

33. Female education was perhaps the most important means of achieving the combined benefits of higher productivity (including access to and actual employment), lower infant mortality and lower fertility. It was, therefore, essential to increase female enrolment levels in primary and secondary education and to control the drop out rates for girls and young women. There was a need to give special attention to training, from literacy to vocational training, in order to improve women's access to employment and self-employment. There was also a need to promote female interest in scientific and technical education and training at the primary, secondary and higher levels and to encourage girls and young women to successfully complete such courses.

34. In the field of education and research, emphasis was placed on the importance of improving the quality of education and of paying attention to research methods involving participatory action. The introduction of gender-sensitive education in curricula already at the primary level was considered an important vehicle in breaking down existing cultural barriers to the advancement of women. Academic institutions and women's organizations in developing countries should be encouraged to undertake gender studies and research.

III. PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE

A. Making Governments accountable

Recommendations

35. Governments must be held accountable for the effectiveness of WID programmes by actually committing adequate funds and resources to such programmes and by including WID personnel with sufficient authority in all policies and planning and programming priorities. Governments should identify quantitative and qualitative national targets (including time-tables) that are appropriate to each national situation for the public and private sectors and should regularly report on that matter to the Commission on the Status of Women and to national forums. It is recommended that information on national WID programmes should be made available and accessible to groups and individuals and that people should be free to provide comments and input on the direction of those programmes.

B. Research for policy reformulation

Recommendations

36. The relationship between global trends and women's productive and reproductive roles should be systematically researched. Comparative research on the effects of development strategies on women and on gender relations should be undertaken and the possibility of gender-aware alternative development strategies should be investigated. Such efforts should include the development of appropriate methodologies including modelling and country case studies in order to strengthen the arguments used in the WID debate. The priority areas for investigation are described below.

Human development

37. There should be a critical evaluation of the emerging strategy, usually termed human resource development, paying particular attention to the

treatment of the interrelationship of production and reproduction, and of paid and unpaid work. What are the implications of the "human capital" perspective for human development? What do women want from human development strategies? The needs of women in different age groups and situations vary; for instance, poor, young or adolescent women workers may have a lot to gain from minimum wage legislation, while professional women gain more from policies in favour of equal opportunities. What are the implications of inequality within households for human development strategies? What is the object of human development, to promote growth or to enhance the capabilities of individual women and men as well?

Democratization of development

38. A critical evaluation should be made of the emerging democratization of development, paying particular attention to gender bias in concepts of democratization. There should be research on the following:

(a) The kinds of democratization women want, and what is needed to facilitate their empowerment in the process of democratization;

(b) The way to extend democratization beyond periodic elections in order to give citizens real control over resource allocation in the public and private sectors;

(c) The identification of the barriers to women exercising such control and of ways in which the effectiveness of democratization could be increased once the barriers are reduced.

The international economy

39. There should be a review of the implications of emerging trade and investment patterns for different categories of women, for instance, what implications the entry of formerly centrally planned economies into the international market would have for women's employment in labour-intensive manufacturing. There should also be an evaluation of gender bias in the way that international trade and investment are organized; new ways of regulating international trade and investment in order to avoid this bias should be considered. The role that non-governmental organizations can play in constructing new types of international relations between women in different countries should be explored. There should be an evaluation of how the reduction of gender bias might improve the functioning of the international economy.

40. An international programme of work should be established to develop the recommendations made at the present Seminar for refocusing the conceptual framework of WID and their operationalization prior to the convening in 1995 of the Fourth World Conference on Women, in order to provide it with inputs to accelerate the implementation of the goals of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. The programme of preparation should include input by practitioners, policy makers, community leaders, academics and project participants. International assistance will be indispensable if such an effort is to be completed in time for the Fourth World Conference on Women.

C. Strengthening policy capacity

Recommendations

41. Within national machineries and WID offices, whether in national or multilateral agencies, staff should have strong skills in policy analysis - particularly, but not only, in economics. They should have a good understanding of gender bias in existing policies and an ability to communicate this understanding to colleagues in the relevant policy sectors. Training could strengthen the skills but appropriate recruitment is probably even more important. It is also important that the policy function of WID units be recognized and respected by their Governments and organizations so that their views are sought in making decisions on policy.

D. Enhancing strategic alliances

Recommendation

42. Those responsible for women's programmes within Governments and development institutions should strengthen alliances with groups outside of the Governments working for women's advancement:

(a) By funding joint meetings;

(b) By facilitating the establishment of women's support groups;

(c) By including women's support groups in the elaboration of policy;

(d) By supporting international networking of women's advocacy groups, be they non-governmental organizations, academics, political and social movements or private sector associations.

43. The utilization of communications technology to facilitate such processes should be encouraged.

E. Programme planning

Recommendation

44. Current development programmes should be examined and existing resources should be reallocated in order to more effectively enhance women's contribution to national development.

Closing the gaps

45. The gaps between men's and women's development should be closed:

(a) By putting into broader practice what is known to work for women;

(b) By promoting technologies that have a proven record of meeting needs, and saving women time and labour, by reviewing new technologies to ensure that those appropriate are also accessible, and by directing programmes to disseminate information on technologies to girls and women;

(c) By ensuring that all education programmes have numerical targets for the enrolment of females at all levels and that they are reviewed from the point of view of the following:

(i) Appropriateness of curriculum;

(ii) Quality of teaching;

(iii) Stereotyping of sectors;

(iv) Social incentives for families, teachers and communities to ensure that girls stay in school;

(d) By reviewing health and sanitation services for their accessibility and appropriateness to women; in particular, goals and targets should be set:

(i) To reduce maternal mortality;

(ii) To increase access to contraception;

(iii) To increase the access of women to information on and the treatment of AIDS, cholera and other epidemic diseases;

(iv) To improve sanitation;

(e) By encouraging:

(i) States that have not done so to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

(ii) Governments to review their laws in order to identify continuing discrimination against women, to implement changes provided for by law and to establish a specific time-frame to complete this work;

(iii) The exploration of means of transforming customary laws that put women at a disadvantage and of educating women on their rights.

Reshaping the development agenda

46. The development agenda must be reshaped based on an analysis of how the reduction of gender bias might improve the functioning of the international economy. At the national level, such an analysis should be carried out by departments of finance and planning commissions. In addition, the research capacity of international financial institutions should be brought to bear.

47. WID units and national machinery should argue for reallocating budgetary resources to sectors that have been identified as key sectors for women.

48. In addition, a network of experts on the gender dimension of macroeconomic policy should be created and supported. Furthermore, mechanisms should be found to position experts with a gender perspective in forums crucial to reshaping the global agenda.

Notes

a/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

b/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.90.XVII.3.

Annex II

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON THE INTEGRATION OF AGEING AND ELDERLY WOMEN INTO DEVELOPMENT

(Vienna, 7-11 October 1991)

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I. AGEING AND OLDER WOMEN'S ROLES IN DEVELOPMENT: CURRENT SITUATION

A. Economic issues

Conclusions

1. The Expert Group Meeting on the Integration of Ageing and Elderly Women into Development concluded that older women made significant contributions to development, both visible and invisible. Societies, however, overlooking their many productive roles and contributions, often regarded them as an economic burden.

2. Policies and programmes were needed to strengthen older women's productive roles and economic viability. The task of finding solutions to the problems that faced older women did not rest solely with Governments; individual women, women's self-help groups, non-governmental organizations, religious organizations, financial institutions and the like must also be included in efforts in that direction.

3. The Expert Group Meeting emphasized the importance of identifying various sources of income for older women. Rapid social change should be cushioned by a linking of income and social support.

4. In the absence of public income-support programmes, feasible mechanisms needed to be developed that would encourage women to save a portion of their income for retirement purposes. Such mechanisms might be part of organizations or schemes that provided access to credit and loans for older women.

5. There was an urgent need to measure and to assess, i.e. put a value on, activities that were not usually recognized as economic. In particular, a lack of knowledge and of such assessments might impede the adoption of

policies and programmes for providing elderly women with adequate support to exercise their productive roles.

6. The Expert Group Meeting was convinced that recognizing and putting a value on these activities would increase women's chances of gaining access to any existing social security, based on their past contributions, and would thus reduce their chances of becoming economically dependent.

7. Family and household changes due to migration affected ageing and family support systems and opportunities for economic activity and, in turn, ageing and elderly women. The wide dispersal of family members had weakened links between them and had reduced the care available to older women.

Recommendations

8. Access to credit for older women is particularly important and should not be restricted because of age or gender. Societies and associations that provide such access should be encouraged.

9. Training and retraining should be made available to ageing and elderly women wishing to enter or reenter the labour force. Skills training should not be denied because of age.

10. Employment policies and practices that discriminate against older women should be eliminated. Employment policies and practices should ensure an optimal level of informed choice for participation in the labour force.

11. To reduce women's chances of becoming economically dependent, Governments and institutions should be encouraged to develop innovative approaches to retirement income security for women. In this process, the significant past contributions of women to society should not be overlooked. In countries with income support systems, effective coverage should be extended, whenever possible, to the informal and agricultural sectors, where the majority of women in developing countries work, and attention should be given to the situation of returned migrant workers. Where there are limitations to extending coverage to those groups, alternative methods of meeting the basic needs of the elderly should be devised and implemented.

12. Caution is urged against focusing exclusively on the cash economy. The importance of non-cash contributions should be noted, as well as the need to develop a range of prototypes whereby such programmes as exchange centres could be established to benefit women. Such centres should recognize the non-cash productive work of women.

13. Research should be carried out to identify the many ways in which older women contribute to development.

14. Relevant research and data should always be gender- and age-disaggregated. In countries with diverse populations, special efforts should be made to learn more about the conditions of older women in minority and ethnic groups.

15. There is an urgent need for research aimed at developing statistical methods of quantifying and evaluating women's invisible contributions. There is a particular need for research on ageing and elderly women's activities both in the informal sector and in sectors not recognized as economic.

16. Governments should be encouraged to include unremunerated domestic activities in their systems of national accounts. Meanwhile, existing data and research should be fully utilized in policy and programme development.

17. The economic and political needs of women with disabilities and of refugee and displaced women should be taken into account.

18. Ways must be found to support families in caring for their older members and to provide care where family care is unavailable or overburdened.

B. Health

Conclusions

19. The Expert Group Meeting stressed that good physical and mental health was essential to the integration of ageing and elderly women into development. It was also one of the goals of development. Continuing participation in economic, political, cultural and community life was closely related to maintaining the health and self-esteem of older women. Technologies and devices that assisted the aged and enabled them to remain active were not readily available or accessible in all societies.

20. Given the high proportion of women in the aged population in most countries, the Expert Group Meeting noted that ageing was one of the foremost issues for women. It expressed concern that existing health systems, health policies and programmes, and research on health did not adequately take into account women's reproductive activities of an economic and socio-cultural nature and did not reflect the high proportion of women in the aged population.

21. The importance of regarding older women as contributors to health care (both as traditional health providers and as more "modern" health-care workers) and not just as users of health systems was stressed. It was felt that that role could be used and enhanced in health programmes, which would also contribute to the development of a more positive image of elderly women.

Recommendations

22. Programmes and policies should be developed to promote, protect and restore the physical and emotional health of older women.

23. Governments and international organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO), should develop actions aimed at ensuring that health-care providers at all levels have an adequate knowledge of strategies to improve the well-being of ageing and elderly women.

24. In countries where users of the health system must pay for care, support measures should be instituted for older women with economic difficulties.

25. Older women should be trained and, where appropriate, retrained in health-care methods and their delivery; their efforts should be supported and actions to provide adequate recompense for their services should be developed.

26. Alternative formal and informal support systems for elderly women and care givers should be strengthened in order to avoid institutionalization as long as possible. Where institutionalization is necessary, the independence and dignity of the institutionalized should be ensured.

27. Access to all restorative technologies, appliances and aids should be as available to the old as to the young and should be available to older women as well as to men, particularly in developing countries.

28. Scholars, research institutes, non-governmental organizations and international organizations should conduct, encourage and share research on diseases and conditions that affect women in later life. Resources need to be made available by both the public and the private sectors for that purpose.

29. WHO, in its technical discussions on women's health and development at the World Health Assembly in May 1992, should pay due attention to older women and their needs. Other United Nations specialized agencies involved in health-related activities should also pay due attention to elderly women. Women experts, including older women, should be closely involved in the development of those initiatives.

C. Social and cultural issues

Conclusions

30. The Expert Group Meeting stressed the importance of involving older women in making decisions about what they wanted and needed. With regard to older women's involvement in social and cultural programmes, associations of older women and their integration in organizations should be encouraged and strengthened. Older women could then play an important advocacy role in Governments, non-governmental organizations and other organizations.

31. Social development should include an acknowledgement of the role of older persons in the past, present and future of their societies. Social and cultural transformation should take place in an atmosphere of intergenerational dialogue and in the context of human rights and gender equality.

32. Empowering older women should be seen as the key to designing adequate policies for diverse groups of older women. Governments, non-governmental organizations, community groups and other formal and informal groups played a crucial role in empowering older women by giving them the necessary tools and opportunities to participate in or influence the process of making decisions about economic, social and political policies that directly or indirectly affected their lives.

Recommendations

33. Older women's political participation at all levels, including at the governmental level, should not be restricted on the basis of age.

34. Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, including educational, religious and women's organizations, should undertake measures to identify and control the exploitation, abuse and neglect of elderly women, as well as violence against elderly women.

35. Governments, United Nations specialized agencies, cultural organizations and educational agencies should identify and discourage cultural values and sterotypes that denigrate the process of ageing in women.

36. Older women's participation in the development, transmission and preservation of culture should be recognized, encouraged and supported.

37. Literacy and lifelong learning among women should be assured and encouraged.

D. Legal issues

Conclusions

38. The Expert Group Meeting recognized that certain legal barriers prevented older women's participation in the development process.

Recommendations

39. Governments, legal associations, non-governmental organizations and donor agencies should examine laws and legal practices that may have adverse consequences for older women.

40. Governments should eliminate all forms of discrimination against older women based on gender and age.

41. All inheritance laws should be based on the principle of gender equality so that older women may continue to have access to land and property.

42. Older women should have access to independent, confidential and affordable legal counsel, without economic barriers.

43. Programmes promoting older women's legal literacy should be established. The expert group meeting on legal literacy, to be organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Office at Vienna, should make specific recommendations targeting at older women.

44. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women should review national reports and the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex) as it applies to older women.

II. AGEING AND OLDER WOMEN'S ROLES IN DEVELOPMENT: FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Conclusions

Status of ageing and elderly women

45. The Expert Group Meeting recognized the important role of ageing and elderly women in all aspects of development, including its economic, cultural, political and social aspects. Governments, non-governmental organizations and financial lending institutions must be urged to consider the potential of elderly women all over the world. That was even more necessary in view of the increasing longevity of women and the growing number of women who outlived men. If efforts were not made to integrate ageing and elderly women into development, not only would their living conditions deteriorate, but they could also become a burden to their countries. It was stressed that integration should go hand in hand with advocacy efforts to change common negative stereotypes of the elderly.

46. The diversity of the situations and characteristics of elderly women in developed and developing countries must be taken into consideration. At the

outset, a clear definition of ageing and a differentiation between ageing and elderly women were needed. Strengthening and improving statistics on older women throughout the world would make it easier to obtain information on their situation. Each country should make an analysis of the situation of elderly women and their contributions to development. A basic standard for data collection, elaborated in a joint effort at the international level, could help to improve statistics on older women throughout the world and could facilitate international comparisons. Those country profiles should reflect the present situation, in addition to enabling high-quality projections for the future to be made, and should include areas of special concern. Moreover, research to identify obstacles to the progress of elderly women was needed. In order to avoid duplication of efforts, national research institutions and statistical offices and/or census bureaux, non-governmental organizations and international organizations should cooperate and exchange relevant information. There was a need for more information on organizations working on the issue of elderly women and on funding organizations supporting projects for elderly women. It was suggested that an inventory of existing networks, including bilateral and international donor and lending agencies, should be published.

Necessary action to integrate ageing and elderly women into development

47. While it was recognized that, besides the need for ageing and elderly women to be integrated into the mainstream of development, there was also a need to consider the status of women in a cohort approach and to identify policy measures tailored to each cohort. Special attention should be given to the different age cohorts among the ageing and to specific target groups, such as female heads of household, single and divorced women, abandoned women, childless women, returned migrant women, women with disabilities, and refugee and displaced women. It was stressed that there should be support programmes for the different age groups and target groups of women. All women, even younger women, should be encouraged to adopt a life-course approach and to plan for the future. That was of particular importance as regards education, training, type of employment, and family life. Educational programmes that continued through each age level could improve the quality of life for women. In areas of the world where agriculture was the main occupation of women, opportunities must be made available for training in modern agricultural methods.

48. In the field of prevention, a healthy lifestyle and appropriate health care were important in avoiding disability in older age. For the well-being of elderly women, the provision of basic technical aids, including glasses, hearing aids, dentures or other supportive aids, adapted in design to the specific needs of women, needed to be provided, together with instruction on their use. That would enable elderly women to play an active role in society and to not be isolated. That applied particularly to developing countries, where basic aids were often not available.

49. It was agreed that the mental health, as well as the physical health, of elderly women deserved more attention. The mental health of older women had been neglected more than any other aspect of their lives. The discussion of the Expert Group highlighted the role of psycho-social factors in mental disorders of elderly women that could also be caused, inter alia, by environmental hazards and degradation. In that respect, the frequent prescribing of drugs, such as tranquillizers, to elderly women was mentioned. Where relevant, support should be provided to elderly women in order to enable them to cope

with the implications of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) epidemic.

50. Independent living, if economic resources allowed it, in close vicinity to children and kin, was the wish of the majority of elderly women. They also wanted to care for themselves as long as possible. Grandmothers played an important role in the family when caring for grandchildren and thus supporting their children and kin. If elderly women were direct care-givers to the children, they were often disadvantaged because they were not entitled to the same rights and economic resources as the children's parents.

51. As regards the caring of elderly, it was generally recognized that the family played an important role. Governments and non-governmental organizations must provide measures that would integrate the elderly into the family and the community. Family life must be strengthened socially and economically. The monopoly of women as the only care-givers in the family had to be broken. All members of a family had a responsibility to care for the elderly and needed to be assisted from outside by social support systems. In situations where family care was not possible, other alternatives should be available in the community. Those social support services could be provided by the State or by non-governmental organizations and should include community services, health care and housing.

52. Ageing and elderly women's issues should be incorporated in the mainstream of development. There should be a component concerned with older women in all development projects run by bilateral and multilateral agencies. The implication was that the recipient country should be aware of the role of elderly women in development projects and should include them in project design. Decision-making bodies in donor agencies needed to be made aware of the elderly women's component. The goal was to integrate the currently invisible contribution of elderly women into project design.

53. Governments should take cognizance of the invisible contribution of women that promoted the well-being of families. Age should not be a criterion for economic assistance. Legislation that disadvantaged women's participation, such as access to land, should be reviewed. Elderly women's contributions took place mainly in the informal sector. Women's invisible work for the family was not remunerated. That brought with it disadvantages in cases involving the break-up of the family, divorce, or widowhood, or people who reached old age without support from a pension system or personal savings. In countries without a functioning comprehensive social security system, the development of such a system had to be linked to the development process in general. Attempts to stimulate women working in the informal sector in low-income countries to begin savings schemes or to contribute to voluntary funds could only be considered a starting-point to give them an incentive to make provisions for old age.

54. It was most important that elderly women themselves be consulted on their needs and opinions. They had to be encouraged to become organized to take their future into their own hands. Participation in decision-making included self-organization and mobilization on political issues of concern to their immediate situation, be it at the local level (in the community) or on global topics linked to peace and ecology. Elderly women needed information and access to information on current political, economic and legislative developments so that they could better understand the actual situation in their country and its impact on their lives.

55. Elderly women, because of their expertise and knowledge, could contribute extensively to voluntary organizations. These voluntary contributions had to be encouraged and recognized in teaching, health care, counselling and other supportive systems such as foster grandparents. That was also a way for women to continue leading active lives in their old age.

Recommendations

Towards a strategy to integrate ageing and elderly women into development

56. Governments should recognize the importance and significance of ageing persons, especially women, and their economic, cultural, political and social contribution to their countries and communities. To ensure that they maintain their self-esteem and that they receive adequate support, elderly women should be given special attention in the policies and programmes of Governments, non-governmental organizations and financial lending institutions. Governments, as well as non-governmental organizations, should include ageing and elderly women as one of the major components of their national targets in the field of ageing for the year 2001. Governments, the private sector and non-governmental organizations should recognize that ageing and elderly women should be considered an integral part of the development process and that each has a role to play in ensuring the implementation of the following recommendations. The United Nations Office at Vienna should ensure that problems of older women are given appropriate recognition in reviewing the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Aging, a/ to be carried out in 1993, in the review and appraisal of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, b/ and the setting of the global targets on ageing to be reached by the year 2001, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/94.

57. Given the ageing of the population and especially the rapid increase in the number of ageing women, the integration of women into development is expected to become an increasingly important issue from a developmental perspective. In view of the great diversity of national situations, it is recommended that Governments should establish and maintain country profiles of the ageing and elderly that include gender-specific data and information and should use those profiles as a basis for projection. That should allow the identification of the major and emerging issues, particularly for ageing and elderly women, including those for special groups of women such as women with disabilities and refugee, displaced and abandoned women. A second component of these projections should be to attempt to match the policy and programme goals to the identified issues and the corresponding roles of Governments and the private and voluntary sectors. In order to assist countries in carrying out this task, it is recommended that the Secretariat should organize a meeting of an expert group to establish a standard country profile and the necessary methodology. It is also recommended that the United Nations system and donors should assist developing countries upon request in conducting the task in time for the results to be considered by the International Conference on Population and Development, to be held in 1994, and the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, to be held in 1995.

Necessary elements for the implementation of the strategies

58. Governments should review their existing laws relating to women and should eliminate laws and practices that contain age and sex discriminatory provisions relating to, for example, employment and income opportunities or

family matters, including marriage and property. The Commission on the Status of Women should examine at its thirty-sixth session existing discrimination concerning the elderly, under the objective of equality, which focuses on de jure and de facto discrimination.

59. The education of the current and future generations of elderly women is an essential factor in the advancement of women, in addition to influencing the potential contribution of women to development. Recognizing the importance of older women's potential and de-emphasizing their problems and vulnerability are essential to the integration of ageing and elderly women into development. Therefore, a major effort should be made to ensure access of all women to basic education, to information on the ageing process, to learning skills (both traditional and when possible non-traditional) and to retraining, where necessary. In addition, all persons and agencies involved in training and education should review their curricula to ensure their appropriateness to existing and future circumstances.

60. Empowerment of women is an essential factor in ensuring their effective participation in development. The importance of economic and political empowerment as one of the primary avenues for overcoming women's problems and vulnerabilities in developing countries should be emphasized. Such empowerment could be achieved through education and training and by involving women in the decision-making process. Empowerment of special groups of women, such as refugee, displaced, abandoned and disabled women and women in the informal and agricultural sectors, is also essential. Non-governmental organizations and community-level organizations have a particular role to play in assisting in the empowerment process.

61. An appropriate information network, covering research, existing data sources, projects and programmes and existing organization and funding sources, is essential to the integration of ageing and elderly women into development. Present efforts should be coordinated to avoid duplication. The United Nations system, together with international and national agencies and non-governmental organizations, should collect information and make it available by 1994 for the upcoming world conferences. As a first step, the focal points in the network should be identified and should receive basic international and national data. Participants of the network should ensure that the information they produce is shared with other members of the network and with the end-users, that is, women themselves.

62. Social programmes should be comprehensive enough to cover the main requirements to enable women to participate in development and should be tailored to the different characteristics of each succeeding generation. Preventive approaches aimed at maintaining the participation of ageing women in development should be designed and implemented. In this connection, efforts should be made, in particular, to ensure that the traditional caring functions of women are increasingly shared within the family, the community and society at large.

63. The present and future integration of women into development is closely linked to the health of women. Women should be encouraged at all ages and at all levels to accept some responsibility for their health, and the principles of personal health care (exercise, diet and family planning) should be promoted, together with measures to reduce environmental risks. Where necessary, they should have adequate access to technical aids (e.g. glasses, hearing-aids).

64. The fact that resources for development are limited should not prevent the concerns of ageing and elderly women from being integrated into existing development projects and programmes. Multilateral, bilateral and financial lending institutions and assistance agencies are encouraged to include this concern in the guidelines for preparing projects and as a criterion in project approval. The participation of ageing women in the preparation of developmental programmes should be encouraged. In this connection, Governments are encouraged to give specific mandates to all multilateral and national donor and lending agencies to ensure that the integration of ageing women is included in the activities they support. Non-governmental organizations and donor and lending agencies should also be encouraged to ensure that elderly women are included in all the activities that they support.

65. In order to integrate older women into development, it will be important to develop and maintain long-term and short-term strategies that will demonstrate the productive capacity and contribution of older women. The income-generating project approach is an appropriate strategy. Creating and expanding access to credit facilities are essential to this approach.

Notes

a/ See Report of the World Assembly on Aging, Vienna, 26 July-6 August 1982 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.82.I.16), chap. VI, sect. A.

b/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.